UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOREST SERVICE
Forest Pest Management
Box 5895, Asheville, N. C. 28803

REPLY TO: 5230 Evaluations

August 12, 1975

SUBJECT: Fall Cankerworm in Georgia

TO: Frank M. Yasinski, Staff Director, FPM, EPI

On June 6, 1975, Forest Pest Management made an aerial sketch map survey to evaluate defoliation on the Chattahoochee National Forest. The purpose of the survey was to locate and determine the extent of fall cankerworm, Alsophila pometaria, infestations reported to us by Forest personnel. The insect was identified from specimens collected on June 5, 1975.

The aerial survey showed four large areas of defoliation, all at high elevations, on four of the Forest's ranger districts. One infestation extends into Georgia from North Carolina at Montgomery Corner covering Sassafras Knob and Eagle Mountain to Ben's Gap. This infestation was approximately 4,000 acres in size and was all on the Brasstown Ranger District. A second infestation containing approximately 3,800 acres was observed along the Appalachian Trail south from Buckeye Cove near Deep Gap extending to Addis Gap. This infestation also extends west approximately 3-1/2 miles across Buzzard Knob. This infestation is on both the Brasstown District and the Tallulah District. The third infestation also located along the Appalachian Trail extends from Young's Lick south and westward across Tray Mountain, Rocky Mountain, and Blue Mountain to Jack's Knob. This was the largest infestation containing more than 7,000 acres of defoliation. This infestation was on the Brasstown and Chattooga Ranger Districts. The fourth infestation was found just west of Wildcat Mountain on the Appalachian Trail extending west across Levelland Mountain and Slaughter Gap to Lake Winfield Scott. The infestation was approximately 7,000 acres and located on the Brasstown and Chestatee Districts.

On June 12 and 13 a ground survey was made by J. D. Ward and P. J. Barry. Defoliation was considered heavy in all areas and the insect in each case was determined to be the fall cankerworm. Very few larvae could be found during the ground examinations and trees that had been defoliated were beginning to refoliate.

The fall cankerworm population has been building up in western North Carolina over the past two years. The insect was probably present in Georgia in light numbers last year but went unnoticed. Suppression measures have not been necessary because infestations are in relatively remote areas. However, since the outbreak appears to be expanding rapidly, forest managers should be aware that the cankerworm has the

potential to become a serious forest pest. It can cause some tree mortality on poor sites after two or more successive years of heavy defoliation. The insect can also become a nuisance in recreation areas due to the presence of the larvae, their silken threads, their frass, and a large number of dipterous parasites associated with the infestation.

A survey should be made this winter to evaluate the potential for defoliation next spring. This can be done in either of two ways, by making an egg mass survey or an adult female census survey by using trap trees. Judging from the rate of spread of the infestations this year, we believe that the outbreak will increase in 1976.

William A Sites

for PATRICK J. BARRY
Supervisory Entomologist